HIGH-PERFORMANCE NETWORK SWITCH

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001]   This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No.
now U.S. Patent no. 6,697,368,
09/855,031, filed on May 15, 2001, the full text of which is incorporated herein
by reference as if reproduced in full below.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

[0002]   The invention relates generally to network switches.

Background Art

[0003]   A network switch is a device that provides a switching function (i.e.,
determines a physical path) in a data communications network. Switching
involves transferring information, such as digital data packets or frames, among
entities of the network. Typically, a switch is a computer having a plurality of
circuit cards coupled to a backplane. In the switching art, the circuit cards are
typically called "blades." The blades are interconnected by a "switch fabric."
Each blade includes a number of physical ports that couple the switch to the
other network entities over various types of media, such as Ethernet, FDDI
(Fiber Distributed Data Interface), or token ring connections. A network entity
includes any device that transmits and/or receives data packets over such media.

[0004]   The switching function provided by the switch typically includes
receiving data at a source port from a network entity and transferring the data to
a destination port. The source and destination ports may be located on the same